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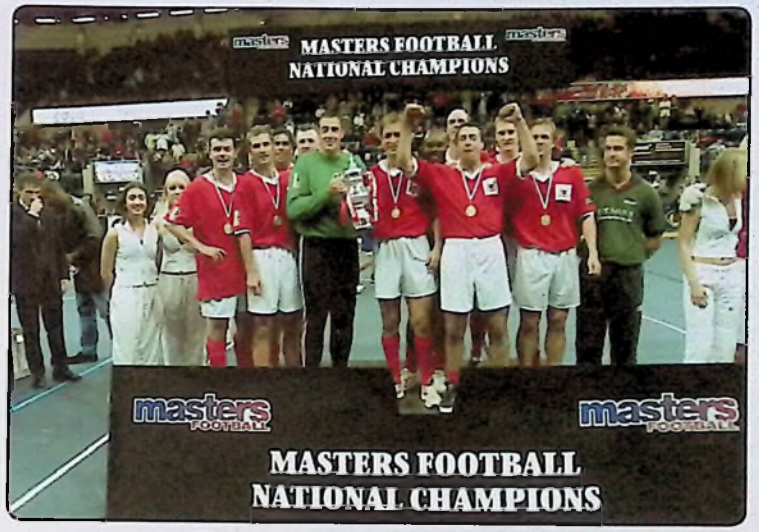
Welcome



The picture on your right was taken in September 2000, at the end of the inaugural year of the Masters Cup. Thanks to strikes by Steve Wigley, Gary Mills and Neil Webb, it shows a triumphant Forest side celebrating their 3-2 win over Rangers to become the very first Masters Cup UK Champions.

This year, we celebrate 10 years of this, our flagship tournament.

Of course, all tournaments go through changes in their formative years and since its inception, several improvements have been made to the Masters Cup format.

During the first exhibition matches in 1998 and 1999, the Masters pitch was green. Back then of course, green made sense. Grass, as we all know, is green so a green carpet would work perfectly for indoor football, right?

Wrong. Even the hardiest seafarer struggled to keep their lunch down when playing on that surface. Worse still, on screen the pitch came across so poorly that even our TV audience began to feel queasy. Taking the lead from hard-court tennis tournaments, the move to a blue pitch was made. It has since become one of the most iconic features of Masters Football.

In 2004 Masters achieved sanctioning from the FA to introduce video replays and sin bin penalties. An instant crowd pleaser, the sin bin gave referees another option in dealing with on-pitch scuffles. As a result, several stars have found themselves doing the walk of shame for their misdemeanours.

As the Masters Cup has evolved, so indeed have the players. Unfairly considered by some to be a resting place for former legends, it is easy to lose sight of what it takes to compete at this level.

The tournament you see today has become one of the most hotly contested football tournaments in the world. But being of qualifying age is no barometer for quality. High profile players have come unstuck in their first forays into Masters Football because of the sheer pace of the games. Under the lights, with fans lining the pitch, with thousands more watching on television, to be a Masters Cup winner is to be a player of real substance.

In nine years of competition, just 56 players have experienced what it feels like to win the Cup. As we welcome in the 10th Masters Cup series, this statistic goes some way in helping to understand just how tough this competition can be to win. This Masters year is no different.

This July we return to Sheffield for an all-Yorkshire affair that sees Hull and Doncaster make their six-a-side debuts. In Glasgow, Dundee United and Hearts compete, the first time these sides have taken part since 2000 and 2006 respectively.

QPR and Fulham are drafted into the London heat to complete a six team format and Tranmere, last year's surprise winners in Liverpool, return to the Echo Arena with the Mersey Masters Cup to defend.

And what of Wolves? As current UK Champions, their win last year in dramatic fashion saw them became one of just seven teams to lift aloft the coveted trophy. This year though, they face a monumental task to repeat this success.

All in, we have 360 players, representing 40 teams across 8 different heats, all vying to make Masters Cup history.

As official Title Sponsors, our thanks go to Screwfix for their continued support of the series. The Screwfix Masters Cup is now an established part of the football calendar, a yardstick for top quality indoor football during the regular off-season.

Thanks also go to Carbrini, as official Kit Suppliers to Masters Football, to Sky Sports for their fabulous coverage of the events and to each player who pulls on a Masters jersey.

We hope you all enjoy the events and remember to cheer long and hard. As the 7th man on the pitch, your team needs you!

Will Rogers, Editor-in-Chief

THE MASTERETTES

New for the 2009 series, Masters are proud to announce the official dancers of the tournament, the Masterettes! Thanks go to all the Masters Members who suggested a new name for our dancers; some were better than others! Here's a bit more info on the girls that bring the glamour to Masters Football!

1. CAROLE ANNE DEENEY
Height: 5ft 7"
Occupation: Project Manager
Star Sign: Cancer
Most people don't know that: I used to write a column for the sports section of the Daily Record newspaper called 'The Fit ladies'

2. CLAIRE NIMMO
Height: 5ft 5"
Occupation: Banking Administrator
Star Sign: Aquarius
Most people don't know that: I have loads of freckles on my arms and legs

3. GEMMA McKEE
Height: 5ft 4"
Occupation: Dance Teacher
Star Sign: Virgo
Most people don't know that: I'm actually quite intelligent but I have far too many blonde moments

4. DEONE ROBERTSON
Height: 5ft 6"
Occupation: Dance Teacher
Star Sign: Virgo
Most people don't know that: That I can play the clarinet

5. HAZEL McGARRY
Height: 5ft
Occupation: Dance Teacher
Star Sign: Capricorn
Most people don't know that: I'm quite shy

6. LYNNE HAIG
Height: 5ft
Occupation: Primary School Teacher
Star Sign: Aries
Most people don't know that: I have two different colour eyes and I can play the piano

7. LINZI SLAMIN
Height: 5ft 1"
Occupation: Student Teacher
Star Sign: Leo
Most people don't know that: I am an 'old person' trapped in a young person's body; I'm obsessed with afternoon tea and going into charity shops and antique shops looking for goodies

8. ANNEMARIE McPHEE
Height: 5ft
Occupation: General Assistant
Star Sign: Cancer
Most people don't know that: My hair is actually strawberry blonde

9. PAULINE McGLINCHEY
Height: 5ft 2"
Occupation: Nail Technician
Star Sign: Taurus
Most people don't know that: I'm terrified of creepy crawlies

This programme is designed and produced by Binocula Design to Print Consultants in association with Masters Football Ltd

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Masters Football Ltd
Berkeley House, 18-24 High Street, Edgware, HA8 7RP
Tel: +44 (020) 8 952 9525
www.mastersfootball.com

"For many fans, winning isn't enough"
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All images courtesy of Action Images

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At a glance...

THE SCREWFIX MASTERS CUP 2009 - VENUE BY VENUE

Heat 1: 07/06/09
Screwfix Northern Masters Cup
Metro Radio Arena, Newcastle
Newcastle - Sunderland - Middlesbrough
Carlisle - Darlington - Hartlepool

Heat 2: 13/06/09
Screwfix Midlands Masters Cup
National Indoor Arena, Birmingham
Aston Villa - Birmingham - WBA - Wolves

Heat 3: 20/06/09
Screwfix London Masters Cup
Wembley Arena, London
Arsenal - Chelsea - Tottenham Hostpur
West Ham - Fulham - QPR

Heat 4: 27/06/09
Screwfix Mersey Masters Cup
Echo Arena, Liverpool
Liverpool - Everton
Tranmere - Wigan

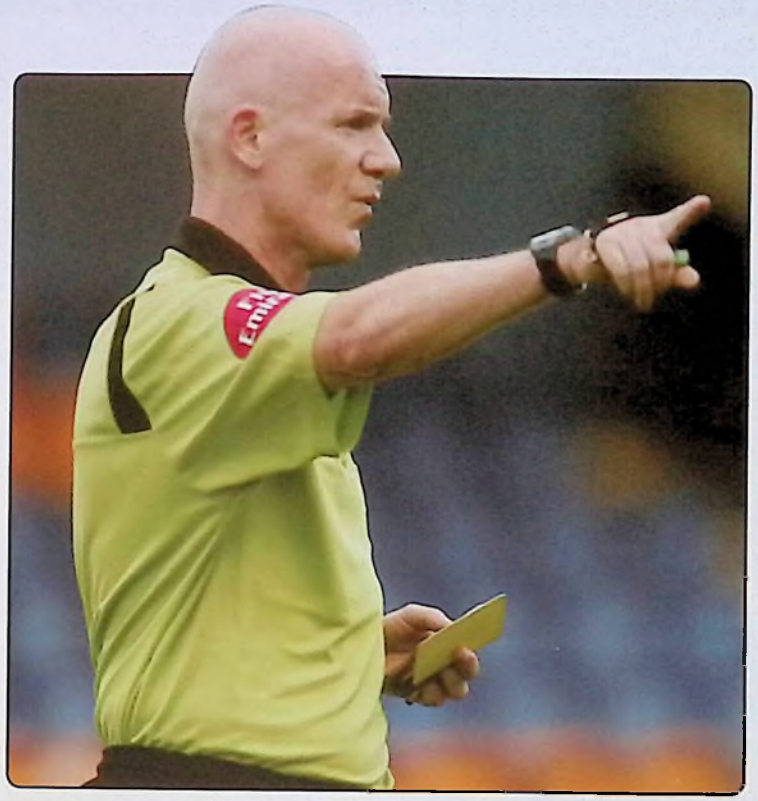
Heat 5: 04/07/09
Screwfix Scottish Masters Cup
Braehead Arena, Glasgow
Celtic - Rangers - Hearts - Dundee Utd

Heat 6: 11/07/09
Screwfix Central Masters Cup
Trent FM Arena, Nottingham
Forest - Derby
Notts County - Leicester

Heat 7: 18/07/09
Screwfix Yorkshire Masters Cup
Sheffield Arena, Sheffield
Sheffield United - Sheffield Wednesday
Leeds - Hull - Barnsley - Doncaster

Heat 8: 25/07/09
Screwfix North West Masters Cup
M.E.N Arena, Manchester
Manchester City - Manchester United
Oldham - Burnley - Bolton - Blackburn

Screwfix Masters Grand Final: 06/09/09
Echo Arena, Liverpool



The Rules

Games will be played on pitches 60 by 30 metres, surrounded by perimeter boards. Each match will be 8 minutes each way.

Each football team can use a squad of 9 players for each game, with a maximum of 6 on the pitch at any one time. An unlimited number of substitutions can be made by each team at any time during the game.

At least 1 footballer must be in the opposition's half at all times or a free-kick will be awarded to the opposition on the halfway line. This rule does not apply to a team which has had a player sent off.

There is no offside.

All free kicks must take place within 5 seconds or the decision is reversed. The opposition must be 5 metres away at free kicks. No minor injuries will be treated on the pitch. The clock will only be stopped for serious injury or time wasting.

The sin bin will be used in an unofficial capacity for yellow card offences. The referee will suggest the player leaves the pitch for 2 minutes.

Any player who receives a red card will be sent off immediately, cannot be replaced and will be banned for the next match. In the most extreme of cases, players will be banned from playing Masters football indefinitely.

There is no extra time. If the scores are level after full time, there will be a penalty shoot out.

The Referees

Clockwise from left. Dermot Gallagher, Eddie Wolstenholme, Jeff Winter, John Underhill, Steve Lodge.

Teams play each other once, with the top two in the group playing off in the regional final.

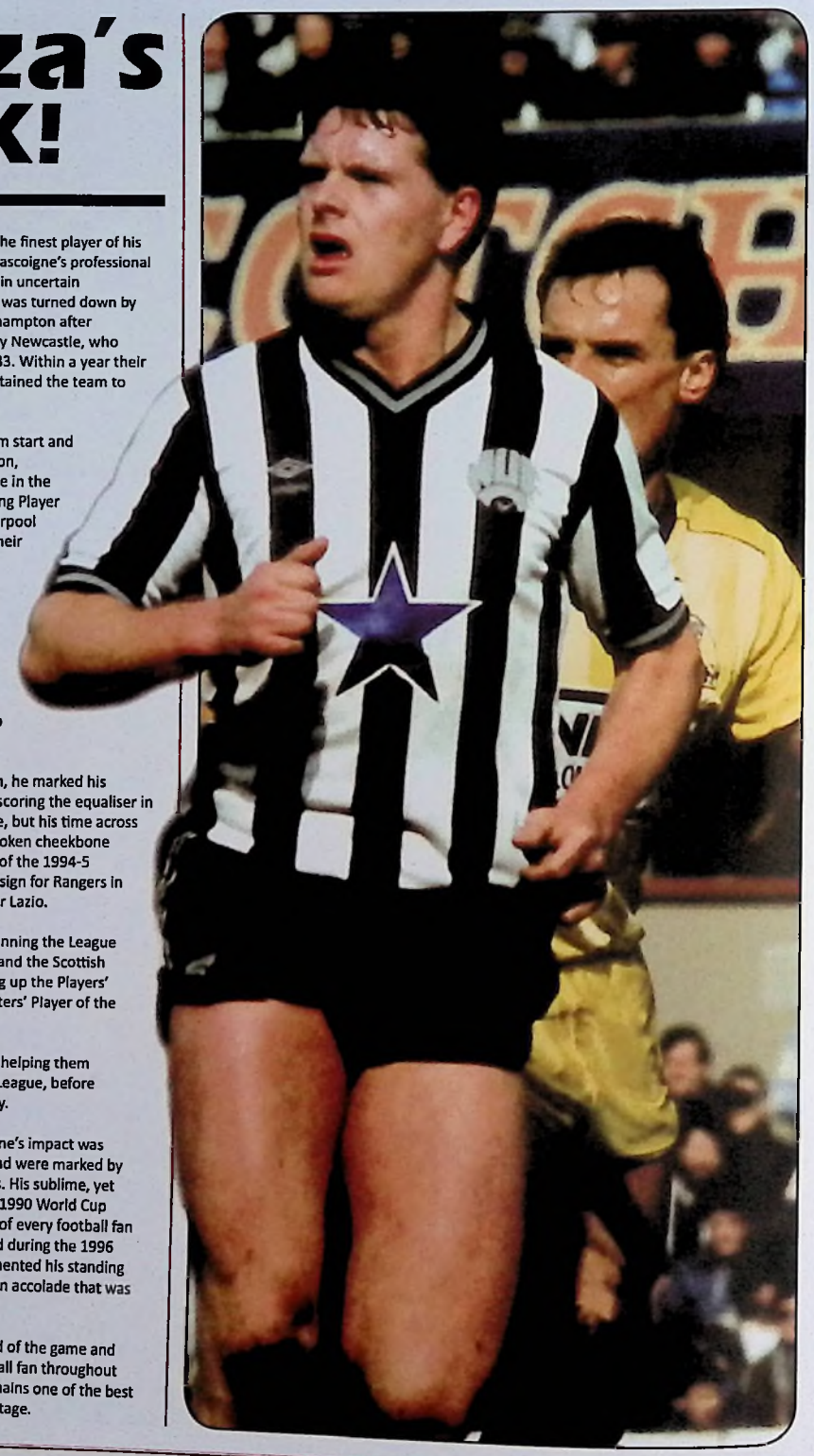
Ranking in each group will be determined as follows...

- greater number of points obtained in all group matches
- goal difference in all group matches
- greater number of goals scored in all group matches

If two teams are equal based upon the ranking criteria, their place shall be determined as follows...

- greater number of points obtained in the group matches between the teams concerned
- goal difference resulting from the group matches between the teams concerned
- greater number of goals scored in the group matches between the teams concerned

Gazza's BACK!



Widely regarded as the finest player of his generation, Paul Gascoigne's professional career started out in uncertain circumstances. He was turned down by Ipswich, Middlesbrough and Southampton after unsuccessful trials but picked up by Newcastle, who signed him as an apprentice in 1983. Within a year their faith was repaid, as Gascoigne captained the team to FA Youth Cup glory.

In 1985, he was handed a first team start and went on to score 9 goals that season, blossoming into a real tour de force in the Toon midfield. As the Barclays Young Player of Year for the 1987-8 season, Liverpool and Manchester Utd stepped up their interest but it was Spurs who won Gascoigne's signature, paying Newcastle a then British transfer record of £2.3m.

Stocky, powerful and supremely gifted, he made 75 appearances and scored 14 goals for the Lillywhites, leading them to FA Cup glory in 1991.

Signed by Lazio that year for £5.5m, he marked his entrance onto the Italian stage by scoring the equaliser in the Rome derby in the 89th minute, but his time across the water was beset by injury. A broken cheekbone and leg saw him miss the majority of the 1994-5 season and Gascoigne returned to sign for Rangers in 1995 after playing just 47 games for Lazio.

North of the border he excelled, winning the League in 1996 and 1997, the League Cup and the Scottish Cup, with Gascoigne himself picking up the Players' Player of the Year and Football Writers' Player of the Year awards for 1996.

In 1998 Gascoigne signed for Boro, helping them achieve promotion to the Premier League, before moving to Everton and later Burnley.

On the international stage, Gascoigne's impact was monumental. His 57 caps for England were marked by two truly memorable performances. His sublime, yet ultimately tragic appearance in the 1990 World Cup Finals won him a place in the heart of every football fan in England. His goal against Scotland during the 1996 European Championships again cemented his standing as a Football Hall of Fame Legend, an accolade that was confirmed in 2002.

As a person and a player, as a legend of the game and an inspiration to almost every football fan throughout the 80s and 90s, Paul Gascoigne remains one of the best footballers ever to grace the world stage.

SCREWFIX

NEWCASTLE

Boro upset the party last year with a 5 nil drubbing of the Toon, denying the Geordies a fifth regional title and another stab at Masters supremacy. Worse still was that despite missing some key players, Newcastle gelled perfectly, scoring 8 goals in their two group matches, beating old foes Sunderland 4-3 in the process.

With 4 Northern Masters titles under their belt and 103 goals over 9 Masters seasons, Newcastle continue to deliver top performances in the heats. Always benefiting from the "seventh man" courtesy of the crowd, they combine a flamboyant, energised style with good results, averaging an impressive 2.6 goals a game – a stat that shows they play to win, irrespective of the stakes. The fans love this approach and so far, last year aside, it's served them well.

Much of Newcastle's success has come from a strong player base, a tight knit group of legends keen to prove their worth for the cause. In Rob Lee, Brian Kilcline and John Beresford, they have players who know the ropes and when combined with new blood like Alex Mathie, they'll be close to forming a solid unit comfortable in defence and attack.

Last year they welcomed Mickey Quinn back into the fold and the popular forward proved a great signing, netting three times, two of them against the Black Cats. This mix of quality serves the team well and with sensible substitutions, it can be a powerful weapon against any side.

But the improvement of Boro is a worry. A power struggle is emerging between these two and Newcastle will need to dig deep into their reserves if they are to make the trip to Liverpool this September.

TEAM SPONSOR

uts

CUP RECORD | 2000 4TH | 2001 3RD | 2002 1ST | 2003 1ST | 2004 3RD | 2005 2ND | 2006 1ST | 2007 1ST | 2008 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

SUNDERLAND

Despite a shaky Masters record that shows the Black Cats are yet to win a regional title, they return each season with renewed vigour, fielding a team full of strong personalities who clearly engage in the challenge from the off. 2008 was no different and top marksman Marco Gabbiadini instantly found his form, notching up a first game hat-trick against hapless newcomers Carlisle.

Like Newcastle, they field players like Paul Hardyman and Gary Bennett who served the team selflessly for hundreds of games. But part of the problem lies here too. A lack of balance in the squad has meant they invariably look to the more experienced members for guidance and these have tended to be defenders.

Bennett himself scores regularly, despite coming from deep but Sunderland have the lowest scoring record of all the established Northern teams and in 6-a-side, this lack of firepower is terminal.

The new 6 team format provides a winner takes all aspect to the groups and in 2008, their narrow loss to Newcastle in Game 2 effectively spelled an end to their dream for another season. This is how close Masters can get. A win in this game would have propelled them into their first final since 2004.

52 goals since their Masters debut gives them a 2 goal-a-game average – a solid foundation from which to develop from but the flip side is damaging. They win just one in three and concede on average one goal more than they score – a total of 71 since 2000. Winning form it is not.

Early event form is however promising and if they can maintain this, a final appearance is not out of the question.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD | 2001 4TH | 2002 3RD | 2003 3RD | 2004 2ND | 2005 3RD | 2006 3RD | 2007 3RD | 2008 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

MIDDLESBROUGH

Boro's performance last year was little short of remarkable. They beat new boys Hartlepool 4-3, doing well to hold out after a late own goal courtesy of Peter Duffield and galvanised by this, they crushed Darlington 5-1, with Craig Hignett netting thrice on his way to the Golden Boot Trophy.

The final against the Toon was terribly one sided, as they ran out 5 nil winners, beating the side who had denied them victory in 2006 and 2007 with ease. The last time they served up a beating as severe as this in a Northern final was back in 2004, when they beat Sunderland by the same margin.

Only a David Kelly hat-trick for Wolves during the semi-final stage of the Grand Final put paid to their UK title hopes, as the Midlands side ran out narrow 3-2 winners. A bitter pill to swallow for Boro, but in Masters Football it is how you take your chances, rather than how many you create, that decides matches.

In Craig Hignett they had the tournament's top scorer, a great achievement given the fact Peter Beardsley's record of 9 goals has stood for four years but in the end, it wasn't to be.

This great form is not a surprise. Since Masters began back in 2000, they've made the regional final every year. You read that right. Boro have contested a final every year they've played, losing 6 times thanks to spirited displays by the likes of Aberdeen, Bradford and Newcastle.

With 3 titles in the bag and a Masters record unmatched by any other team, the smart money is on Boro making their tenth final in ten years and maybe, just maybe going all the way.

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CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 2ND | 2002 2ND | 2003 2ND | 2004 1ST | 2005 1ST | 2006 2ND | 2007 2ND | 2008 1ST

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

CARLISLE

Previewing the stats, it's far too easy to write a team off because of a woeful record. More so when they've contested just one event and in the case of the Blue Army, last year they were undone by 2 hat-tricks in 2 games, by Newcastle and Sunderland hit men Ketsbaia and Gabbiadini respectively. Few teams could survive the mauling Carlisle received in their debut Masters season.

With 2 games played yielding 2 losses, with 7 conceded and only 2 scored, you could be forgiven for thinking there is little to draw inspiration from. Not so. In Darren Edmundson, Rod Thomas, Dean Walling and John Halpin, they have a number of Carlisle players who have sweat blood for the cause for several years, over hundreds of games.

Indeed for a team new to Masters, their squad prmises great potential for the future. Kevin Gray, just 38 this year, defended the line for Carlisle as recently as 2007, and Paul Simpson, a player with vast experience playing on the wing for Manchester City and Derby, only left Brunton Park in 2006.

Last year they even drew upon the experience of current Carlisle boss Greg Abbott, someone who earned his spurs at right back for Bradford between 1982 and 1991 and who has now immersed himself in perfecting the art of management – another skill handy for Masters.

This mixture of youth and experience is central to their future success. The Northern heat is one of the toughest groups in the calendar, with little given up for new teams wanting to make an impression. The 6-a-side game is hard but at least now Carlisle know what to expect.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2008 5TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

DARLINGTON

One of 2 new teams drafted into the Northern Masters last year, Darlington went into their first event with a clear strategy. As the first game on, they faced Hartlepool, local rivals but more importantly, a side with previous Masters experience.

In a 2 game group, your chances of progressing are practically zero if you get tonked early on so Darlington kept it tight, choosing to play themselves out of trouble and avoiding the long-ball game, a tactic that frustrated the opposition and kept energy levels ticking over.

What unfolded was a cagey game, full of mistakes and counter-attacks but the Quakers had clearly come to win. Their measured approach was sufficiently backed up by the likes of Liddle and Toman, who gave the front men confidence to run the channels and try their luck.

In fact, it was Liddle, himself a Darlington hero, who netted the only goal, putting them top of the table and setting up a tie with Middlesbrough. A tie that sadly they were always destined to lose.

With Boro's form so strong, Darlington's Masters debut was over, courtesy of a 5-1 mauling but in the ashes of this defeat were a few glowing embers of hope. Few teams win their first game and there appeared a clear focus amongst the Darlington team, a spirit and appetite for the challenge that will serve them well this year.

With Martin Gray, who was there for Darlo during the Division 3 play off final in 2000, as well as players like Lee Nogan and Glenn Naylor who are tried and tested forwards, Darlington have the personnel to come good.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2008 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

HARTLEPOOL

Back in 2006 the Hartlepool boys cut their teeth on the Masters carpet for the very first time and lost their 3 group games. A year later they returned and fought hard, earning their first point in a draw against Newcastle. They still, however, finished bottom.

The Masters learning curve is a steep one and experience is key. Playing Masters is not like regular 5-a-side. It's quicker, more intense and with a bigger pitch, saps energy levels faster than many players realise. Throw in the lights, the cameras and fans screaming blue murder just feet away from you as you tear down the wing and you can understand why some teams struggle to find their form.

In terms of players, the Monkey Hangers are blessed with pedigree in every department. With the exception of 2, their 2008 squad featured players who played more than 150 games for them during their pro careers. But a glance at the team sheet shows a glut of midfielders, a common aspect to many a Masters team.

Their only out-and-out striker last season was Paul Baker, but even he, with his 2.5 goal per game ratio, can't spearhead the attack for 2 straight games. Player rotation is key but you need enough of a choice to ensure the goals don't dry up.

The onion bag bulged just 3 times for Hartlepool last season. This is the main problem Hartlepool face.

8 games in, no wins and 32 goals conceded, they're waiting for the tide to turn and word is they won't have to wait long. 2008 saw them lose twice, but only just – both games lost by a solitary goal – so this year, they know they have every chance.

CUP RECORD | 2008 5TH

TEAM SPONSOR

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TEAM STRIP

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WOLVES

It could have been a very different story for Wolves last year. That Darren Roberts was to cancel out an Andy Reece opener for Walsall in game 2 proved pivotal, not just in determining the winner of the heat, but in ultimately deciding who the UK Champions of 2008 would be.

A constant in the Wolves squad since they were drafted into the series in 2005, Roberts has been a revelation in the black and gold. It makes little difference that he played the majority of his career at Darlington and Scarborough. His short time at Wolves during the early 90s was kick started by a debut goal against Birmingham City and for the legends of Wolves, he's remained just as important.

Last year he scored his second in two games as Wolves romped home 7-1 winners against West Brom. His partnership with Don Goodman proved sublime, as they both scored hat-tricks in subsequent games, dispatching Villa in the final 6-2 to win yet another regional cup.

In David Kelly, they have a remarkable talent, a player who ups his game on the big occasion. It was Kelly's coolly taken hat-trick against Boro in the Grand Final Semi-Finals that set up Wolves' first final appearance since 2005.

The fact they went on to win the UK title, in Birmingham no less, signalled that Wolves had finally come of age.

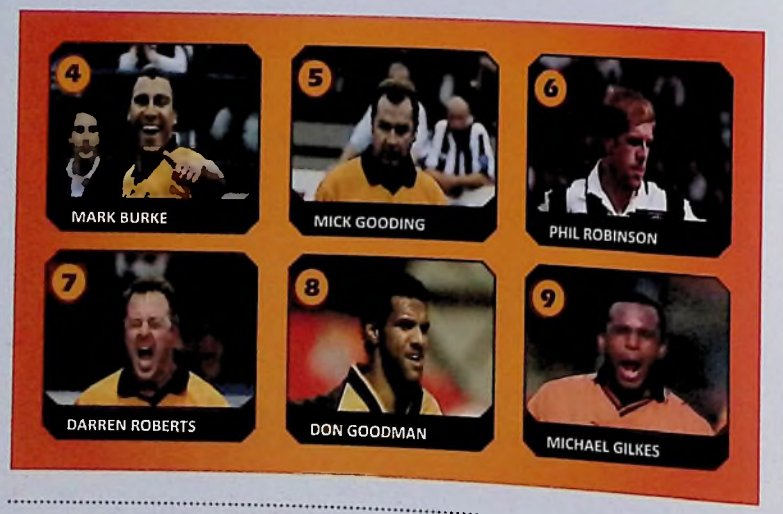
Interestingly, despite having 4 regional titles to their name, until last year they had only scored 50 goals in 26 matches. But in 2008 alone, they netted 26 times, averaging over 4 a game.

It seems an already great team has discovered an appetite for scoring. Other teams beware!

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2002 2ND | 2003 3RD | 2004 1ST | 2005 4TH | 2006 1ST | 2007 1ST | 2008 1ST



TEAM STRIP

carbrini

ASTON VILLA

Last year the point was made that Villa's performances were becoming a cause for concern and that in order to succeed they needed to take their chances early and shut up shop.

This diagnosis was based on their wilderness years back in 2006 and 2007, when they finished bottom and third respectively. The fire had seemingly gone out of their attack and their defence looked unbalanced.

They began their Masters career as beaten finalists, losing narrowly to Forest in 2000 and despite blips in form for the next 2 seasons, they returned to make the final again in 2003, only to be beaten by high flying West Brom.

Out in the cold due to the Masters team rotation policy in 2004, Villa notched their first regional win a year later, only to capitulate in 2006 and 2007, a worrying repeat of their topsy-turvy form at the start of the decade.

Last year, the ghosts of 2003 returned as Villa made their fourth final, only to be beaten this time by Wolves. A trend has emerged. Good one year, atrocious the next, poor after that and then brilliant.

Dean Saunders, Mark Kinsella and Hassan Kachloul made their debuts for Villa last year. All 3 scored, a boon for the Villains since scoring has been a real problem. Only 54 in 28 games tells it's own story but a closer look at the squad shows they have some real talent. David Norton for one, who makes a habit of finding the net irrespective of how they are playing as a team.

If you believe in stats, Villa will finish fourth this time around. If you don't, cross those fingers.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 4TH | 2002 3RD | 2003 2ND | 2004 4TH | 2005 1ST | 2006 4TH | 2007 3RD | 2008 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

BIRMINGHAM

Clarkson, Devlin, Hyde – Game 1 of the 2008 Midlands heat saw the Blues crash home three within minutes of taking to the blue baize and despite letting Coventry back in with 2 goals of their own, it increasingly looked like they would deliver a three-peat and make a third consecutive regional final.

But uncertainty crept into the team. A cagey, ill-tempered affair with Villa never really got going and although there were 4 goals, the draw was probably a fair result. Fair, but heartbreaking for the Blues, as it was only goal difference that saw Villa progress through to the final at their expense.

The emergence of Paul Devlin has been encouraging. His abilities appear to gel well with the other players and their formation of 3 forwards, 3 midfielders and 2 defenders give the side enough options should they need to mix it up or press home an advantage.

Historically a low scoring heat, the rivalry that surrounds these fixtures can be debilitating to strikers wanting time and space to make their mark. Losing to your neighbours is a no no and so what emerges are performances that are inherently defensive.

Drawing too many games has been a problem. 7 out of 21 played is way above the national average and a win record of 23% make for grim reading. But in truth, only Wolves can boast of winning over half their games so to some extent the statistics only reveal what we already know. That achieving a place in the final can be somewhat of a lottery.

Although Birmingham have the ability to be in control of their destiny from the kick off, their final group match will undoubtedly decide their fate.

TEAM SPONSOR

carbrini

CUP RECORD	2000 6TH	2003 4TH	2004 3RD	2005 3RD	2006 2ND	2007 2ND	2008 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

WBA

Last year the Baggies were a victim of circumstance. After Walsall had exceeded all expectation and managed a draw against the reigning champions Wolves, the cup holders were chomping at the bit to make their mark on the heat, knowing full well that 4 points would effectively assure them a final spot.

West Brom were like lambs to the slaughter. Within minutes Wolves had racked up a 3 goal lead as first Roberts, Robinson and then Kelly exposed their defensive frailties. Only Kevin Donovan's goal stopped it being a whitewash but by then the damage was done.

But credit to West Brom. They reorganised and hit Walsall for 5 in their second outing, with Richard Sneekes getting a brace and Roy Hunter and Carl Heggs getting in on the action. Suddenly West Brom has rediscovered the type of form that saw them pick up the 2003 title, together with a raft of Man of the Match and Magic Moment awards.

But it wasn't to be. The 6 team format is invariably a cruel mistress to those teams who fail to deliver in their first game but realistically, West Brom have been in the doldrums for several years now. Ever since losing the final to Villa in 2005, a year that marked the first time a team had won a regional title without winning a group game, they have struggled in the groups, being unable to finish higher than third in the last 3 years.

Baggie's fans have shown real commitment over the years but they've been starved of success for too long. Despite the freakish career form of Villa, West Brom have a chance to return to the top. Whether they take it is up to them.

TEAM SPONSOR

FCL

CUP RECORD	2003 1ST	2004 2ND	2005 2ND	2006 3RD	2007 4TH	2008 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

The Romford PELE

Born March 7th 1973 in Romford, Essex, Raymond "Ray" Parlour is without question one of the most underrated players of his generation. He played for just three clubs during his professional career, but it was his time with Arsenal, where he joined as a trainee, that is most memorable.

Having joined the Gunners in 1989, Parlour properly broke into the squad during the 1994-5 campaign, cementing his place further after the arrival of Arsene Wenger in 1996.

Played on the right wing or in central midfield, he was instrumental in helping Arsenal win the Double in 1998, proving his worth further that year by being named Man of the Match in their 2 nil FA Cup Final victory over Newcastle United.

Despite being in the shadow of midfield teammate Patrick Viera, Parlour continued to shine, holding down his place and ensuring Arsenal challenged for every trophy on offer. His persistence, dogged determination and ability to make and score goals found him an instant fanbase amongst the Highbury faithful, who saw him as the architypal Arsenal player; strong, committed and loyal to the cause.

His ability to influence games was renowned and he clearly flourished as a player under the guidance of Wenger. With a manager known for favouring continental stars, it's a mark of some respect that Wenger kept faith in a British born talent, who repaid this belief by helping Arsenal win another Double, this time in 2002.

The 2002 Double was made sweeter for Parlour by the fact it was he who opened the scoring in their 2 nil win over Chelsea in the FA Cup Final with a wonderful 30 yard strike. As a playmaking midfielder, Parlour alone could also change games and such goals of distinction were by no means few and far between.

In the quarter finals of the 2000 UEFA Cup, he scored a hat-trick in Arsenal's 4-2 away win against Werder Bremen. A few months later, he scored another hat-trick, this time during a 5 nil Premier League win over Newcastle and in April of 2001, he scored another 30 yarder to beat Valencia 2-1 in the Champions League quarter final.

These achievements, rather strangely, continued to go under the radar of most football commentators until 2003, when as stand-in captain he led Arsenal to a 5-1 win against Inter Milan at the San Siro.

During his time in North London, Ray Parlour played 464 games and scored 32 goals. He won 3 Premier League titles, 4 FA Cups, 1 League Cup and 1 European Cup Winners' Cup.

Not bad for a lad from Romford.

ARSENAL

Arsenal need some good fortune. It's as simple as that. They work hard, they close down well, they run the channels and they try and score goals. But this work ethic isn't doing it for them, as last year's results show. Two goalless draws saw them finish below Watford, West Ham, Chelsea and Crystal Palace, with the only positive being they finished above arch-rivals Spurs.

Goalless draws in Masters are not only incredibly rare, but worrying too. 16 minutes on the blue baize running your guts out is tough, but not to score is debilitating and it's clear that serious questions are starting to be asked about their lack of firepower.

Ray Parlour is however a great signing and as his performance in this season's Home Nations proved he's lost none of his superb ability in the middle of the park. During his spell at Highbury, he may have only scored 32 from 464 games, but already this year he's scored 3 in 3, marking him out as a potent source of goals.

Parlour was joined by another debutant Steve Morrow, he of the 1993 League Cup winner against Sheffield Wednesday. Morrow quickly found his feet at 6-a-side, having spent several seasons honing his managerial skills at Major League Soccer team FC Dallas and although goals are all important, so is a strong defence. This year, it's Hillier who combines with Winterburn to ensure an impenetrable backline for the Gooners.

But you can't dismiss the statistics entirely. An 18% win record is woeful. Conversely, their 40% draw record is more encouraging. Arsenal's mid-table obscurity needs to be addressed but at least they have something to build upon.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD

2000 1ST	2001 2ND	2002 4TH	2003 3RD	2004 2ND	2005 3RD	2006 3RD	2007 4TH	2008 5TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

SPURS

You could be forgiven for thinking the wheels have come off the Spurs bandwagon of late. 2 years ago they had a fourth straight London title in their sights, but a second half collapse saw them lose the final on penalties to Chelsea, despite a commanding 3 nil lead at the break.

Fast-forward 12 months and Spurs, for so long the team to beat in the event, are struggling. A goalless draw against Arsenal did little to improve confidence and with Watford managing the same scoreline, a final place was suddenly on offer when these two met.

The Spurs of a few years ago would have taken this game in their stride but Watford have a decent record in London and strikes from Mooney, Roberts and Butler saw the Hornets through, banishing Spurs to the bottom of the table.

Part of the problem could lie in their goal ratio. They ship 2 goals a game, but on average score just 2.4 in return and after 9 years of competition, Spurs have drawn a third of their matches and won just 44% of them.

Statistics can of course skew reality somewhat and so it's testament to how Spurs play that has seen them become so successful. Their free-flowing style invites teams to attack, but this openness is tempered by zonal defending that breaks up play and helps set the midfielders clear to score.

Never a guaranteed tactic, it does nonetheless free up time and space for players to do the job they've been brought in to do and despite last season's performance, Spurs are still the best Masters side in North London.

But times change. Spurs need to address the slide and do so quickly.

TEAM SPONSOR

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CUP RECORD | 2000 4TH | 2001 5TH | 2002 2ND | 2003 4TH | 2004 1ST | 2005 1ST | 2006 1ST | 2007 2ND | 2008 6TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

CHELSEA

Remarkably, you have to go back to the summer of 2002 to find a season when Chelsea didn't win a Masters heat. Between 2003 and 2007, they successfully navigated their way through the London or Southern Masters, consistently beating teams like Southampton, West Ham, Fulham, QPR and Spurs to rapidly become one of the best teams in the competition.

During this pink period, they won one UK title in 2004 and lost out at the final hurdle on two occasions. In 2005 and 2006, Leicester and Rangers denied the West London club what would have been Masters immortality, for a team to win 3 UK titles in a row would surely never have been matched.

So last season, Chelsea were clear favourites. But they hadn't bargained for Crystal Palace, whose hard fought 3-1 win over the Blues put West Ham firmly in control of the group. Darren Barnard, in 2007 the man who couldn't miss, struggled to find form, meaning 2 early Dean Gordon strikes meant Chelsea were chasing the game from the off and as such, they never truly recovered.

They rallied well, putting 4 past Hammer's keeper Alan McKnight in game 2 but by then the damage had been done. The 6 team format punishes poor starts and so it proved, as Chelsea missed out on going through by just one goal, one of the few times goal difference alone has decided a group winner.

Chelsea however remain a dominant force. They've won 24 out of 38 games played and with only 4 draws in 9 Masters seasons, their average of 10 goals a heat either ensures victory or a high scoring loss.

And with 5 regional titles to their name, you cannot write them off.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD | 2001 4TH | 2002 3RD | 2003 1ST | 2004 1ST | 2005 1ST | 2006 1ST | 2007 1ST | 2008 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

WEST HAM

Oh joy of joys. For the last 8 seasons we've had to wax lyrical of what could have been for the Hammers as they limped from one year to the next enduring some of the most wretched luck there is.

Finalists 5 times before with just one regional title to their name, West Ham looked set to endorse their tag as the nearly men for time immemorial but it was not to be. Goals from Horlock, Brevett, Brown and Keen got them off to the perfect start in London last year, as they thumped Palace 4-1 in the opening tie.

With their tails up and a rest between games, they faced Chelsea with confidence at an all-time high. The football gods were clearly on their side too, as Chelsea had just suffered a hiding at the hands of Palace, but strange things happen in Masters.

Despite goals from Keen and Rowland, Darren Barnard suddenly found his shooting boots for Chelsea, netting twice along with Tore Andre Flo and David Lee to run out 4-2 winners.

The two group format rewards goals however, and the Hammer's first game proved the difference. Their 4 goal romp put them a goal ahead of the Blues and got them a place in the final, where they never looked in trouble against a faltering Watford team.

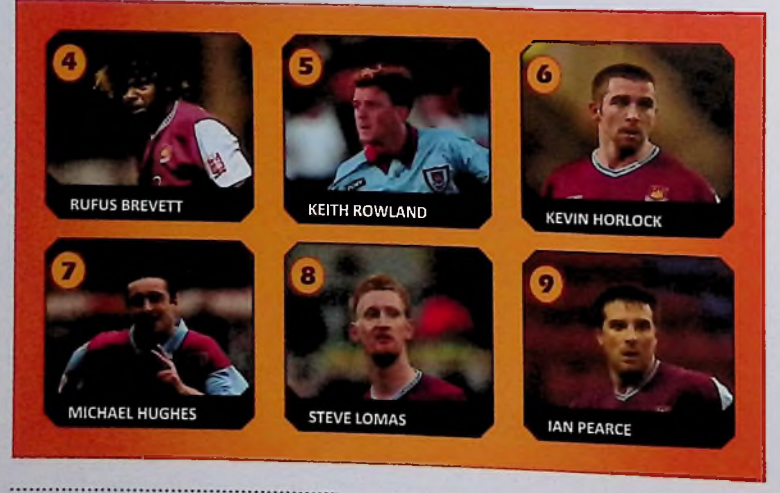
With unparalleled support, West Ham return to Wembley as reigning London Masters Champions and stand a great chance of winning back-to-back titles.

For several years, Paolo Di Canio has been mooted as the one player they need to complete what on paper is a great Masters team. Only time will tell if the Italian fancies a trip to North London.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 1ST | 2002 2ND | 2003 2ND | 2004 2ND | 2005 2ND | 2006 4TH | 2007 3RD | 2008 1ST



TEAM STRIP

carbrini

FULHAM

Fulham missed out on the first 2 years of the Masters Cup and so when they were called up to contest the London heat at the now defunct London Arena, they were ill-prepared for what awaited them.

A bottom of the table finish that year yielded just 2 goals from 3 games and in 2003, the first year of our imposed exile to Milton Keynes whist Wembley was being redeveloped, their return was more encouraging. A demolition job by Chelsea rocked Fulham's confidence early on but in fairness, they rallied well, losing narrowly to Southampton 4-3 in an epic, end-to-end encounter.

These 4 goals gave them the boost they needed and the following season they won their first game in Masters Football, a 4-3 bruiser with West Ham that saw legends like John Dreyer, Terry Angus, Gary Brazil and Phil Stant find the onion bag. A 2-1 defeat to Chelsea put paid to any title hopes but progress had been made and many agreed that as an emerging force, Fulham were fast becoming a team to be reckoned with.

And so it was proved in 2005. Wins against Chelsea and Southampton put them top of the table, with the early loss to Crystal Palace a mere blip on their way to potential Masters glory.

But in what seems to be another instalment in the nightmare, Fulham fell foul once again to the blue half of West London, losing to goals from Kevin McAllister, Gavin Peacock and Jason Cundy to deny them the regional title.

Losing to Chelsea during this time was no disgrace. They were the reigning UK Champions. But Fulham haven't played since so whether they pick up from where they left off is anyone's guess.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2002 4TH | 2003 3RD | 2004 3RD | 2005 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

QPR

Another team to suffer indirectly from the popularity of Masters Football, like Fulham, QPR missed out on seasons 2000 and 2001, but rather than be drafted in to compete in 2002, they didn't actually make their debut until 2005.

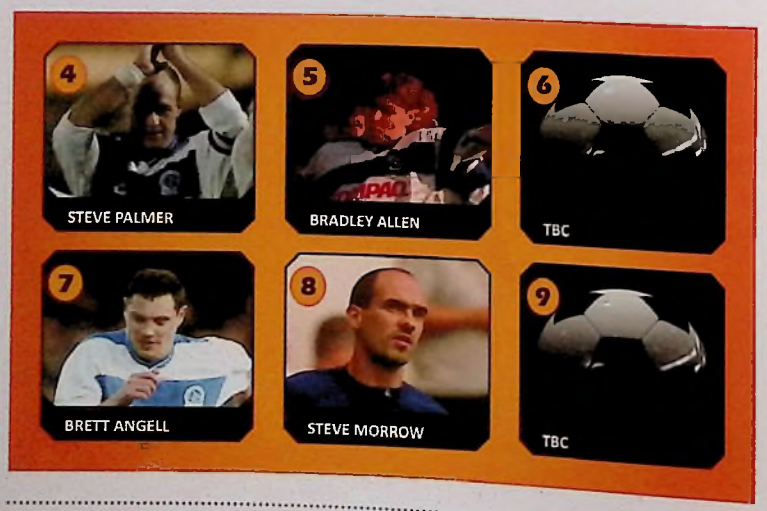
A victim of the sheer number of eligible teams to contest the London heats, QPR remained on the radar of Masters for several years, due in part to the number of emails received from fans calling for their legends to take part.

Milton Keynes 2005 was therefore a chance for QPR to show their stuff and to be honest, the likes of Karl Connelly, Andy Tilson and John Bryne got on the score sheet from the off, netting in all 3 group games. A 2-2 draw against Spurs, a 1-1 draw against Arsenal and a narrow 3-2 loss to West Ham meant they finished bottom, but few teams score 5 on their debut outing so the future looked good.

And so it proved to be as they followed a similar path to Fulham, building on a good season with an even better one a year later. Finalists in 2006, the similarities with the Cottagers continued, as they lost to Chelsea in a 5-1 mauling, with only Michael Meaker scoring. During the group stages however, they had gone toe-to-toe with the Blues, securing a 4-4 draw and remember, this was the Chelsea side that sported Zola, Wise and Poyet. On reflection, QPR have performed perhaps better than the history books give them credit for.

2007 and 2008 saw Watford take their place and their good form consigned to the past. Resurrected for this season, QPR's pedigree is strong, past form is promising and their fan base committed. QPR could go far.

CUP RECORD | 2005 4TH | 2006 2ND



TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

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LIVERPOOL

Liverpool suffered their first ever regional final defeat in 2007, to Leicester, who rubbed salt into the wound by going on to win the UK title that year and match the Red's record of 2 Masters Cups. For a team who've won 6 heats in 9 seasons, it was a bitter pill to swallow.

But after years of exile away from Merseyside due to logistical issues – Liverpool didn't have an arena – Masters finally brought the team back home and true to form, they made the final again. They won all 3 group games, scored 11 in the process and looked like a team rejuvenated. The final should have been a shoe-in.

Enter Tranmere. As Masters debutants, they had no right to do as well as they did. They lost to Liverpool in the groups 2-1 and managed only a 1-1 draw with Wigan. A Liverpool win was not only on the cards. It was expected.

Masters Football produces several huge upsets each year and this was one of them. Liverpool looked great all evening, with 6 out of 8 outfield players finding the net. In fact only Ian Rush failed to score, but his work rate was second to none, setting up several chances in all four games.

They did lose Molby early on however, which was a blow. His ability to pick a pass has been central to Liverpool's success over the years and being a man down at 6-a-side means the rest have to work harder and play for longer.

148 goals in 48 matches returns a 3 goals per game average and they've lost just 9 times in 9 seasons. The stats don't lie. Liverpool remain a quality Masters team.

TEAM SPONSOR

Virgin trains

CUP RECORD | 2000 1ST | 2001 1ST | 2002 1ST | 2003 3RD | 2004 1ST | 2005 1ST | 2006 1ST | 2007 2ND | 2008 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

EVERTON

It's easy to dismiss Everton's Masters Football record as one of terrible under achievement. 2004 remains the one beacon of light in what has been 9 seasons of hurt but testament to the fans, they continue to show up and give their support.

And so they should. Everton, like any big club, is more than just a local football team for many thousands of Goodison Park devotees and despite their Masters team struggling to re-create the form of the 1980's, their fans appreciate the hard work put in by those who pull on the famous blue jersey.

In truth, they are due a renaissance. Having finished either third or fourth in the table for 7 out of 9 seasons, last year's performance was an encouraging mix of dogged determination and cool finishing. In previous tournaments Everton have squandered chances carved out by sensible build up play but last year they appeared to have some measure on what to do and when.

In Peter Beagrie, they have a seasoned pro who knows Masters well. It's no surprise he popped up to score a hat trick against Wigan last year and his strike against Tranmere proved his worth to the team. By utilising his abilities and ensuring the balance of the team compliments each player's skills, Everton stand every chance of finally realising their potential.

They continue to either win or lose games too, having drawn only 4 from 28 which in Masters is a good sign. It shows they go out to win, knowing full well playing for a point does them few favours when trying to make the final.

But after 9 years of Masters, they are showing a goal difference of minus 29. This needs to be addressed.

TEAM SPONSOR

ADVANCE

CUP RECORD | 2000 4TH | 2001 3RD | 2002 3RD | 2003 4TH | 2004 1ST | 2005 3RD | 2006 3RD | 2007 3RD | 2008 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

TRANMERE

Well well well. Stuart Barlow, Eddie Bishop, John McGreal, Kenny Irons – take a bow. Of course it's a team game and all 9 who starred for Tranmere played their part last season but to see 4 different scorers in a debut year is rarer than seeing James Taylor, assistant Player Liaison at Masters Football, actually do a full day's work.

The Tranmere story is intrinsically linked with the magic of the Masters Cup. That a debut team can win their regional heat is fantastic, but for them to continue into the Grand Final, hold their nerve during penalties to dispatch 2006 Champions Rangers and then lose narrowly to eventual finalists Man City was pure Roy of the Rovers stuff.

You have to go back to the Scottish Masters in 2002 and Hibernian to find another team to win a regional title in their first year and this time around the success of Tranmere sets up an intriguing Merseyside tie.

Ask a regular joe on the street, indeed any bookie operating in the UK today and to a man, they'll point to Liverpool and suggest you withdraw your child's university fund and lump it all on a win for the Reds.

But this assumption that big clubs always triumph is outdated. Tranmere scored 11 times last year, netting 5 against Everton with 3 different scorers and their final performance was nothing short of immense. To score 4 times against Liverpool is superb form and to prove it was no fluke 2 months later at the Grand Final shows Tranmere pose a serious threat to the more established Masters teams.

As they defend their title, bookies across the country will be reviewing their prices.

TEAM SPONSOR

B&M Waste Services

CUP RECORD | 2008 1ST

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

WIGAN

After a great start to their Masters career, many people were expecting a repeat performance in 2008. Losing finalists in their debut year, you can't ask for a better introduction to the indoor game and were it not for Clayton Blackmore scoring late to snatch victory for Man Utd, 2007 could have seen Wigan grace the Grand Final with a chance of lifting the UK title.

But. And there is a but. Looking at the stats from 2007, Wigan's march to the final wasn't that easy. They pipped Man City to the final by goal difference alone, in fact by just one solitary goal and they only won one group game, losing and drawing the other 2 ties to scrape through.

They finished bottom of the table last year too, so did Wigan over achieve in their debut year?

The answer is, rather predictably, no. You can score hatfuls of goals, but if your defence is leaky then the team who keeps it tight and snatches a draw will progress. Beautiful football doesn't necessarily equate to winning football.

History shows that if you score a hat-trick, you tend to win, so when Neil Redfearn crashed home his third against the Toffess, Wigan fans were dancing in the aisles. But not for long. A Beagrie hat-trick, a Warren Apsinall winner and suddenly they needed a win against Tranmere to stand any chance at all. A 1-1 draw was all they could muster and within the space of 32 minutes, Wigan had experienced the Masters sucker punch for the first time.

This year they return, well versed in the highs and lows of competitive indoor football, but in such a tight group, anything could happen.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2007 2ND 2008 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

Rivalries in football exist in every league, in every country in the world. Without them, the sport itself would cease to be, for it is not healthy competition, but hard-nosed, bloody rivalry that makes football the world's most popular game.

For many fans, winning isn't enough. The reason your tea tastes so good the morning after a big game, why your toast is crispier and the marmalade sweeter is not because you won, but because the result is at the expense of your rivals. That it should deny them a cup double, or better still, the league championship is something you can only dream of.

Across the globe football rivalries manifest themselves in different ways. Causes and consequences of high profile rivalries can be conflicts between supporters, large media coverage, even high television viewing figures but in reality a rivalry that boasts true intensity is one with its roots entrenched in social and political issues.

To combine issues that affect people's lives, their very being, with a sport that demands so much passion makes for incendiary circumstances and the Old Firm rivalry, like no other in the world, creates such an atmosphere that irrespective of the number of times they meet, the effect is the same. Winning is everything. Defeat is

"For many fans, winning isn't enough"

RELIGION, PASSION, VIOLENCE. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE OLD FIRM, ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR DERBY GAMES IN THE WORLD

incomprehensible and desperately hard to take. You can't delve into the background of the Old Firm without mentioning the political issues that underpin it.

A series of complex disputes, some centred on religion and some related to Northern Ireland politics infuse the rivalry, on occasion peppering its history with sectarian violence.

Put simply and by no means exclusively, Celtic are associated historically with the Catholic peoples of Ireland. Founded in the east end of Glasgow, Celtic's roots lie in the local Irish Catholic community of the west of Scotland, becoming the club of choice for Irish immigrants who moved to Scotland in the late 19th century.

In contrast Rangers, when it was formed in 1872, had no such links to religion, but became associated in part to the Protestant community of Glasgow, sporting fans with largely loyalist sensibilities.

The fact both teams jointly won the inaugural Scottish League effectively cemented their roles as principle challengers to each other.

"this derby match has been contested over 370 times"

Up until the First World War, both clubs got on well but the next few years would consolidate the growing divide that exists between the two clubs.

Large casualties for Scottish and Northern Irish regiments at the battle of the Somme, the Easter Uprising of 1916 and the influx of Northern Irish workers to Glasgow are just three factors that point to a shift in cultural attitudes as the close connections between the west of Scotland and Ireland hit the buffers.

The two clubs became a mark of identity for each camp, a point of difference and to this day, the rivalry is recognised as one of the greatest in the world.

Officially dating back to 1888, this derby match has been contested over 370 times and such is the ferocity of the rivalry that very few players have played for both clubs. Alfie Conn, Maurice Johnston, Kenny Miller, Steven Pressley, Mark Brown and Barry Robson represent the 6 players to have made the switch since 1912.

The two clubs normally compete four times a year in the Scottish Premier League and as of 2009, Rangers and Celtic had played each other 385 times, with Rangers winning 153 matches, Celtic 139 matches and 93 draws.

Such is the importance of the two clubs that the presence of Rangers and Celtic has been estimated to be worth £120 million to the Scottish economy.

The march of football as an increasingly commercialised product is the reality of today's game. Players have become brands in themselves and every facet of the sport is packaged, sold on and consumed by an ever hungry public. Things have undoubtedly changed.

But some things remain. Football rivalry, as a living, breathing entity passed down from generation to generation remains, and quite rightly so.

The world's greatest football rivalry is now in its 121st year.

Some of the game's greatest players have pulled on the jerseys of either Celtic or Rangers and experienced first hand what it means to play for these clubs.

They immediately understand its importance.

The Old Firm rivalry is as old as football itself.

CELTIC

The Masters gods are yet to shine on Celtic. As one of the best supported teams in the series, nothing can sway the support given to the players by the Parkhead faithful and despite years of hurt, Hoops fans will once again show up in fine voice to prove that their team have what it takes to go all the way.

Last year they came so close, losing to Rangers 5-3 in the final after a mesmerising journey through the group that saw them top the table. Goals from Tommy Johnson and David Elliott got them off to the perfect start against reigning Scottish Champions Motherwell, as they ran out 3-2 winners.

With the team riding high, game 2 pitched them against Kilmarnock, a team with scant Masters experience and it showed. Celtic smelled victory from the first toot of the referee's whistle, going on to score 6 with the front men of Reggie Blinker and Darren Jackson filling their boots thanks to shaky defending.

Such was the genial feeling within the camp that even a loss to Rangers in the groups did little to discourage them and with a decent rest before the final, a Celtic win was on the cards. But it wasn't to be. As Rangers dug deep into their reserves, Celtic lost their shape and with it the game.

With just 1 regional title to their name, back in 2005, their record makes for interesting reading. 84 goals scored, 78 conceded, 13 games won, 16 games lost and 4 games drawn.

In 9 seasons, they've contested 5 finals, but their best chance, just 12 short months ago, wasn't taken. The Hoops can deliver the title, but consistency is key.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 4TH | 2001 3RD | 2002 3RD | 2003 2ND | 2004 2ND | 2005 1ST | 2006 3RD | 2007 2ND | 2008 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

RANGERS

The Scottish Masters last year was one of the closest on record. Rangers, Celtic and Motherwell all finished on 6 points, with a plus 3 goal difference but an Old Firm clash to decide the title was only confirmed late on due to the Masters count-back rule on goals scored.

That Rangers made the final was a minor miracle, given the fact their team was decimated at the eleventh hour with the withdrawals of Ally McCoist and Alex Cleland.

With only 7 players to contest a 3 game group, substitutions play an integral role in ensuring fitness is maintained. 48 minutes of football is a long time to last without sufficient replacements.

Testimony then to Rangers, who found strength in the face of adversity to score 14 goals, including two 5 goal routs of Celtic to win their fifth, and arguably their sweetest, regional title in 9 years.

Gordon Durie was class personified. He netted in every game he played, masterminding the win against Kilmarnock with 2 strikes that paved the way for this famous win. Together with Mark Walters, Billy Dodds and Derek McInnes, they terrorised opponents' defences relentlessly, taking their chances calmly and then tracking back to help out.

The final against Celtic was pure theatre, as the rivalry spilled over at each end to expose the desire of both teams to win. But it was Rangers' night. As UK Champions in 2006, they have scored over 130 goals in Masters and continue to amaze and enthral.

The Scottish Masters is never easy to second guess and as an experienced outfit, Rangers have every chance of succeeding again.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 2ND | 2002 2ND | 2003 1ST | 2004 1ST | 2005 3RD | 2006 1ST | 2007 4TH | 2008 1ST

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

HEARTS

Back when US rapper Eminem was waxing lyrical about Slim Shady, Hearts were helping define the Scottish Masters landscape in our first year of competition by topping the table with a plus 5 goal difference.

Wins that year over Dundee Utd and Celtic, as well as a 2-2 draw against Rangers had catapulted the Jam Tarts to the verge of Masters supremacy at a time when many had written off all but the Old Firm for victory. That Rangers won the event 4-2 said more about their strength and depth in squad than any clear superiority. Hearts had got up to speed quickly at 6-a-side, scoring 11 in 4 and had promised the travelling fans a better showing the following year.

True to their word, they returned to score 18 goals and finish the evening the 2001 Scottish Masters Champions. Goals from Kenny Black, Eamonn Bannon, David Bowman and Sandy Stewart saw Hearts put 5 past Rangers and 6 past Celtic in one of the most one-sided group displays of the series.

The 5-3 win against Rangers in the final took them to the Grand Final, where they continued to score heavily, finding the net 6 times against Leeds in game 1, going on to lose in the semi-finals 3-1 to eventual winners Liverpool.

This good form though was not to last. Third place finishes in 2002 and 2003 were followed by a two year exile in favour of Aberdeen and Kilmarnock and when they returned in 2006, they could only manage fourth place.

Two more years out sees them return to the Scottish heat untried and untested in the current Masters climate. They need to rediscover their early form to stand a realistic chance of progressing.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 1ST | 2002 3RD | 2003 3RD | 2006 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

DUNDEE UTD

Hmm. Team profiles are hard to write at the best of times, but especially when the team in question has only played once, some 9 years ago.

What Dundee Utd did to the Masters Football hierarchy to warrant such a long time in the indoor football wilderness heaven only knows. Worse still, the Dundee Utd team from that year also appears to have been misplaced, leaving a rather sad gap in the records on the official Masters website.

So what conclusions can we draw? Well in 2000, Dundee Utd finished third in the table. They beat Celtic 3-1, but lost their next two ties 4-1 and 3-1 to Hearts and Rangers respectively.

Over the seasons they, more than most, became victims of the Masters Football team rotation policy, giving way to the likes of Aberdeen, Kilmarnock, Hibernian, St Mirren and Motherwell to try their luck, all with varying degrees of success.

Whether Dundee Utd would have built on their promising showing back in our inaugural year is anyone's guess. Good enough to beat Celtic, legend has it they fielded a worthy team, full of players with strong links to Tannadice Park but without the chance to shine in future years any momentum was lost.

This season, we welcome back The Terrors to a competition that whilst similar in format, has changed in many ways.

No longer a haven for legends keen for one last hurrah, the Masters Cup has continued to evolve, demanding more of the players.

With the re-emergence of Dundee Utd, alongside Hearts, the 2009 event promises to be a mouth-watering prospect for all.

TEAM SPONSOR

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CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

IAN WOAN... "...makes them moan"

So said the TV commentator during Nottingham Forest's 1996 5th Round FA Cup tie with Spurs at White Hart Lane. Woan was to score twice that day, both times from free kicks outside the area to confirm his place as one of the best dead ball specialists in the Premier League.

Woan didn't start his career at the City Ground however. He began at Manchester City in 1985, spending the next 4 years plying his trade for Heswell, Caenarfon Town, Newtown and Runcorn before Forest came in for him in 1989. 10 months later he made his debut in a 6-2 win against Norwich, going on to score 3 in 12 matches to secure his place in the side.

As one of the few naturally left footed players in the league at the time, Woan quickly made a name for himself for his elegant passing and fierce shooting ability. He was part of the squad that finished 3rd in the Premiership in 1995, earning Forest a UEFA Cup place but despite consistently good performances, Woan was somehow overlooked for an England call up.

However 1996 was to be his year. Deputising for an injured Stuart Pearce, Woan proved himself to be a class act when it came to taking charge of dead ball situations.

Helping Forest to 2 quarter final cups runs that year, his display against Spurs in the FA Cup was legendary. The first of his goals was a 25 yard free kick that beat England keeper Ian Walker. The second was even better.

After Ronny Rosenthal had felled Steve Stone on the far right hand side of the penalty area, Woan, despite the angle being against him, had the audacity to go for goal. To the audible dismay of the home support, Walker was beaten again, prompting the commentator to utter the words above.

As the only player to remain with Forest throughout the whole of the 1990s, after 218 matches and 31 goals, he moved on, first to Bolton and then across the water to Major League Soccer team the Columbus Crew.

2 seasons later he returned, linking up with former Forest team mate Nigel Jemson at Shrewsbury Town. The pair inspired Shrewsbury to one of their finest ever results, beating Everton - featuring a young Wayne Rooney - in the 3rd round of the 2003 FA Cup.

He went back to the United States that summer, signing for A-League side the Syracuse Salty Dogs but stayed for just one season before again returning to England to pursue his coaching career.

Currently Under 18 coach at Portsmouth, Ian Woan was one of the most natural, and as a result one of the finest left footed players to have played in the Premier League.

FOREST

It's been a tale of two halves for Forest fans. The legends of the City Ground got off to the perfect start back in 2000, winning their heat in style and following it up with a win at the Grand Final to claim the inaugural Masters Cup.

The team that year was good too, full of former internationals with a head for the big stage. Nigel Clough, Johnny Metgod, Gary Birties, Steve Hodge – it was a team that inspired and enthralled, with the necessary mix of strong-arm defending and classy counter-attacks that destroyed opponents and won over the fans from the off.

But in 2001 and 2002, this form deserted them as Coventry came to the fore. With only a Slendatone Boot of the Tournament Award to speak of, courtesy of Nigel Clough, Forest appeared to be in terminal decline.

The next 2 years saw Norwich and Ipswich contest the Central heats, so with the enforced lay off, Forest had time to re-group. Back for the 2005 season, their third place finish was disappointing but the next year, they lost to Leicester in the final and in 2007, they returned to winnings ways, managing to make the semi-finals of the Grand Final before Leicester dumped them out.

In 2008, the revival continued with another final contested, and subsequently lost, to Leicester. Victim in part to Leicester's rise to power, Forest's main problem has been goals. They've scored just 46 in 9 years, with a win rate of 44%. With 46 goals shipped and drawing 1 in every 3 games they play, it's clear Forest have done remarkably well to maintain such a good run of recent form.

But in reality, this goal drought could continue to be their undoing.

CUP RECORD | 2000 1ST | 2001 6TH | 2002 2ND | 2005 3RD | 2006 2ND | 2007 1ST | 2008 2ND

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

DERBY

Another team with an equal, and not particularly helpful, spread of wins, losses and draws throughout their Masters career that has effectively ensured they remain in mid-table obscurity.

They've taken to the carpet 19 times over the years, but won just 6 matches. 7 times beaten, Derby have drawn 6 and scored just 34 times, one of the lowest goal tallies in the series. Their well documented rivalry with Forest always makes for an interesting battle, but the statistics tell of a team who have never really delivered on their potential.

Last season, they dug themselves out of trouble by salvaging a 2-2 draw with Notts County in game 1 but such was the intensity of game 2 against Forest that any semblance of measured, controlled play went out the window as both teams became more desperate for the win. As a result, the 1-1 draw was probably fair, but ultimately detrimental to Derby's hopes of making the final.

In Dean Sturridge, they have a fabulous player who knows his way to goal but his much awaited match up with Darryl Powell has yet to materialise. Between them they've scored 6 of Derby's 10 goals over the past 2 seasons and if they get to play with Darren Wassell and Phil Gee, two further players who have shown a consistent flair for scoring, Derby could wriggle out of their third place woes and make a decent challenge for the title.

But as with other teams in the group, the presence of Leicester has raised the bar. Derby's real chance of making a final lies in them putting rivalry to one side and ensuring they get the better of the Nottingham sides in the groups.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD | 2001 2ND | 2002 4TH | 2005 4TH | 2006 3RD | 2007 3RD | 2008 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

NOTTS COUNTY

A worthy Masters team with a cracking worth ethic, Notts County suffered at the hands of better sides last year, but only just. Their opening game with Derby was a real bone cruncher that yielded 4 goals and a point for each but moreover, left a pervading sense of what could have been.

A brace from Ian Richardson had put the Rams firmly on the back foot, but defensive frailties let Dean Sturridge and Shane Nicholson in to make it 2-2. Drawn in a tough group anyway, their second game against Forest was a must win and by half time, it appeared that County had done enough. Forest looked ill-equipped to deal with the pace of Shaun Murray and Alan Paris and strikes from Ian Baraclough and Gary Martindale had momentarily put County top of the table.

Forest though are a good second half team. They closed down County in the middle of the carpet and cut off the channels well, allowing their front men to operate in enough space to make a difference. Jason Lee and Nigel Jemson popped up to grab 3 between them and demote County to the foot of the table, consigning the Magpies to another fruitless Masters season.

Notts County's run in the tournament has been short, but despite this, their record isn't great. Winning just 1 in 4 will rarely get you to the final stages, nor will an average of 1.3 goals per game. Over half the games County play end in draws too, which only works in your favour if you win the other game!

If they can't score more, they need to defend their leads better, especially in the last 5 minutes of games when energy levels dip.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2005 2ND | 2006 4TH | 2007 2ND | 2008 5TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

LEICESTER

Few teams strike fear into the hearts of the competition quite like Leicester. Unlike a Liverpool or a Chelsea, they avoid the assumption that because they are a "big" club, they should automatically win, irrespective of the opposition. This invariably leads to rivals raising their game and making the likelihood of an upset even greater.

With Leicester though, despite being one of the most successful teams in the series, they remain under the radar of most commentators when discussing possible Masters Cup Champions. And this is despite having a 60% win record, one of the highest win ratios in the competition.

They've contested every Masters Cup since the tournament began and their rise to prominence in the 6-a-side game is nothing short of astonishing. Between 2000 and 2002, they languished in either third or fourth place of the table, unable to put together a decent run of results.

But in 2003, they happened upon a formula for successful indoor football that has seen them make the regional finals 5 times out of the last 6. Only in 2004 did they fail to win a Masters heat, losing that year to Coventry but since then, Leicester have won 4 titles back-to-back.

In 2005 they won the Masters Cup, in 2006 they lost in the semi-finals of the Grand Final and in 2007, they won the UK title again, ensuring their place in a very select group of teams to have won multiple national titles.

Last year they won here in style, netting 9 times in the groups and scoring a further 5 as they demolished Forest 5-1 come the final. As a result, you simply cannot bet against another Leicester win here in Nottingham.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 5TH | 2001 3RD | 2002 3RD | 2003 1ST | 2004 2ND | 2005 1ST | 2006 1ST | 2007 1ST | 2008 1ST

TEAM STRIP

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SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

The Steel City haven't had much to cheer about in Masters of late and last year, this was made worse by the fact Sheffield had to make way for our first Western Masters event held down in Cardiff.

Event rotation is an unfortunate by-product of a successful series but such is the draw of the Sheffield teams that the likes of Wednesday were drafted into the Nottingham heat last season to compete once more.

Wednesday though have been struggling to find form in Masters for some time and the trip down the motorway didn't seem to help their fortunes. Drawn against arch-rivals Sheffield United and 2-time UK Champions Leicester, the Owls faced an uphill task from the start.

Game 1 saw them contest an epic battle against the Blades, with Greg Fee and Jon McCarthy scoring early on, but sustainability throughout matches has been poor and United hit back almost immediately. Despite Fee netting again late on, by the time the whistle had blown Wednesday had shipped 5. The fans that had made the journey remained vocal but in truth, the night was over. Game 2 against Leicester was horrendously one sided, as Wednesday went down 5 nil.

You have to go back to 2005 to see a successful Wednesday side. That year they lost narrowly to Liverpool in the final but since then, their form has deserted them. The last 3 tournaments have resulted in 3 bottom of the table finishes. In 9 seasons of Masters, they have won just 30% of their games, conceding 10 goals more than they have scored.

Back on home carpet this year, they need a good start to stand any chance of progressing.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 1ST | 2001 2ND | 2002 4TH | 2003 3RD | 2004 2ND | 2005 2ND | 2006 4TH | 2007 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

SHEFFIELD UNITED

The Blades, like Wednesday, have found it hard to make an impression in Masters Football for several seasons now. Interestingly, both Sheffield teams had exactly the same record this time last year, having played 29, won 11, lost 11 and drawn 7, with 1 regional title to their name.

Together with Wednesday, they too were displaced in 2008 to compete in the Central heat but they faired a little better. They battled so well against pre-tournament favourites Leicester in their opening game that by half time, it looked increasingly like an upset was on the cards.

Goals from Mark Todd and Carl Bradshaw put the Foxes onto the back foot and by the break, Sheffield United had really found their feet. Stroking the ball around with ease, they had played well. But come the second half, energy levels started to sap. Leicester, well versed in grinding out results, capitalised on sloppy defending to net 4 in quick succession.

Undeterred, the Blades hit back in game 2, beating Wednesday 5-3 in a wonderful match to cement second place in their group. The reality of the 6 team heat means any dropped points tend to ensure you miss the final, but there were elements of this performance, away from home as well, that showed the Blades are starting to improve. Locality is all important in Masters Football and being back in Sheffield will make a tremendous difference. An all-Yorkshire affair will ensure each game is keenly contested but it's this rivalry, underpinning every pass and every chance on goal that will decide which team has what it takes to go all the way.

Sheffield United could be this team...but again, a good start is imperative.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 3RD | 2002 2ND | 2003 1ST | 2004 3RD | 2005 4TH | 2006 2ND | 2007 3RD

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

LEEDS

At first glance, you could be forgiven for thinking that since Masters began, some ten years ago now, Leeds have failed to live up to their billing. As one of the biggest teams in the series, they command a loyal following at each event and should be up there with the likes of Liverpool, Leicester and Chelsea in career wins.

Their record tells of a team who have conceded 84 goals in 9 seasons and in indoor football, this spells disaster. Winning just 13 times in 34 attempts, Leeds have lost exactly half their games and achieved 4 draws along the way, completing a pretty murky picture.

But. And there is a big but. Leeds have in fact won 4 regional titles.

In 2000, they finished 3rd, but returned to win the heat the following year, beating Sheffield Wednesday. Their Grand Final showing that year though was poor, as they finished bottom.

In 2002, the same thing happened. Having defended their Yorkshire title, they made a pig's ear of the Grand Final.

With the pressure of a possible 3-peat in 2003, Leeds folded in spectacular fashion, finishing bottom. They continued folding into the 2004 series, where they finished, you've guessed it, bottom.

A no show in 2005, Leeds completed a Lazarus style comeback by winning back-to-back titles in 2006 and 2007. Amazingly their Grand Final appearances continued to nosedive. In both years, they finished...ahem...bottom.

Last season, they were 3rd. Does this tell us something? No, not really.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD | 2001 1ST | 2002 1ST | 2003 4TH | 2004 4TH | 2006 1ST | 2007 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

HULL

TEAM SPONSOR

IAVISION broadcast media

CUP RECORD | 2009 FIRST YEAR OF MASTERS COMPETITION

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

BARNSLEY

Back in the early days of Masters Football, Barnsley made their first and sadly, for Tykes fans at least, their last appearance in the competition.

In 2001, whilst many of you (don't try and deny it) were bopping away, or if you prefer, swaying casually on the fringes of the dance floor waiting for your moment, to the likes of Blue, Shaggy and Atomic Kitten, Barnsley were busy trying to beat up their local rivals in the second Yorkshire Masters.

They didn't fare well. At a time when Leeds and Sheffield Wednesday were riding high, fielding the likes of Tony Dorigo and Chris Waddle, Barnsley were busy cutting their teeth in one of the toughest groups of the series. No love is lost amongst Yorkshire folk when it comes to supporting your team but to be fair, despite no experience of the format, Barnsley did quite well.

Ok, they finished bottom of the table, but look closer and it really wasn't that bad. Game 1 saw them lose 3-2 to Sheffield United and in game 2 they went down 2 nil to Wednesday, courtesy in part to a Chris Waddle wonder goal that earned him the Masters Magic Moment award for the tournament.

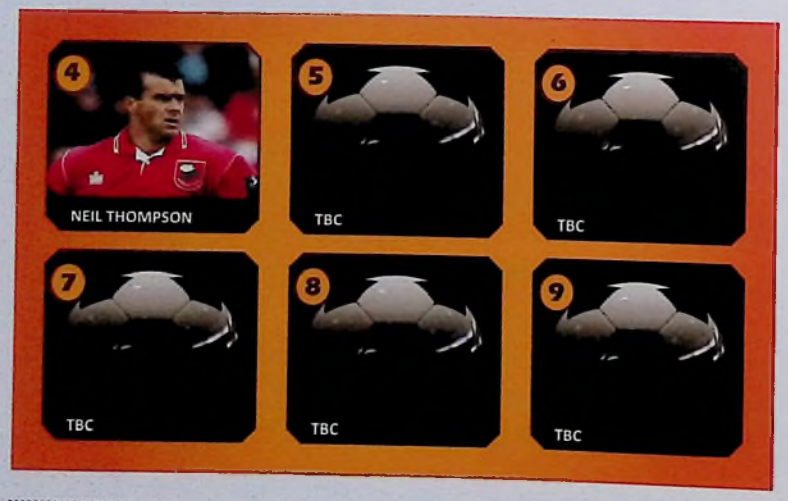
Their final match was against Leeds, a close game they eventually lost 3-2. Once again, player power proved instrumental. Dorigo controlled the middle of the carpet the entire game, like he had for most of the evening, and he not only helped Leeds win the title, but picked up the Player of the Tournament award to boot.

All in all, 2001 saw Barnsley score 4 in 3, not a disgraceful start to a Masters career. Their return to the series is much anticipated.

CUP RECORD | 2001 4TH

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL



TEAM STRIP

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DONCASTER

CUP RECORD | 2009 FIRST YEAR OF MASTERS COMPETITION

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MASTERS FOOTBALL

TEAM STRIP

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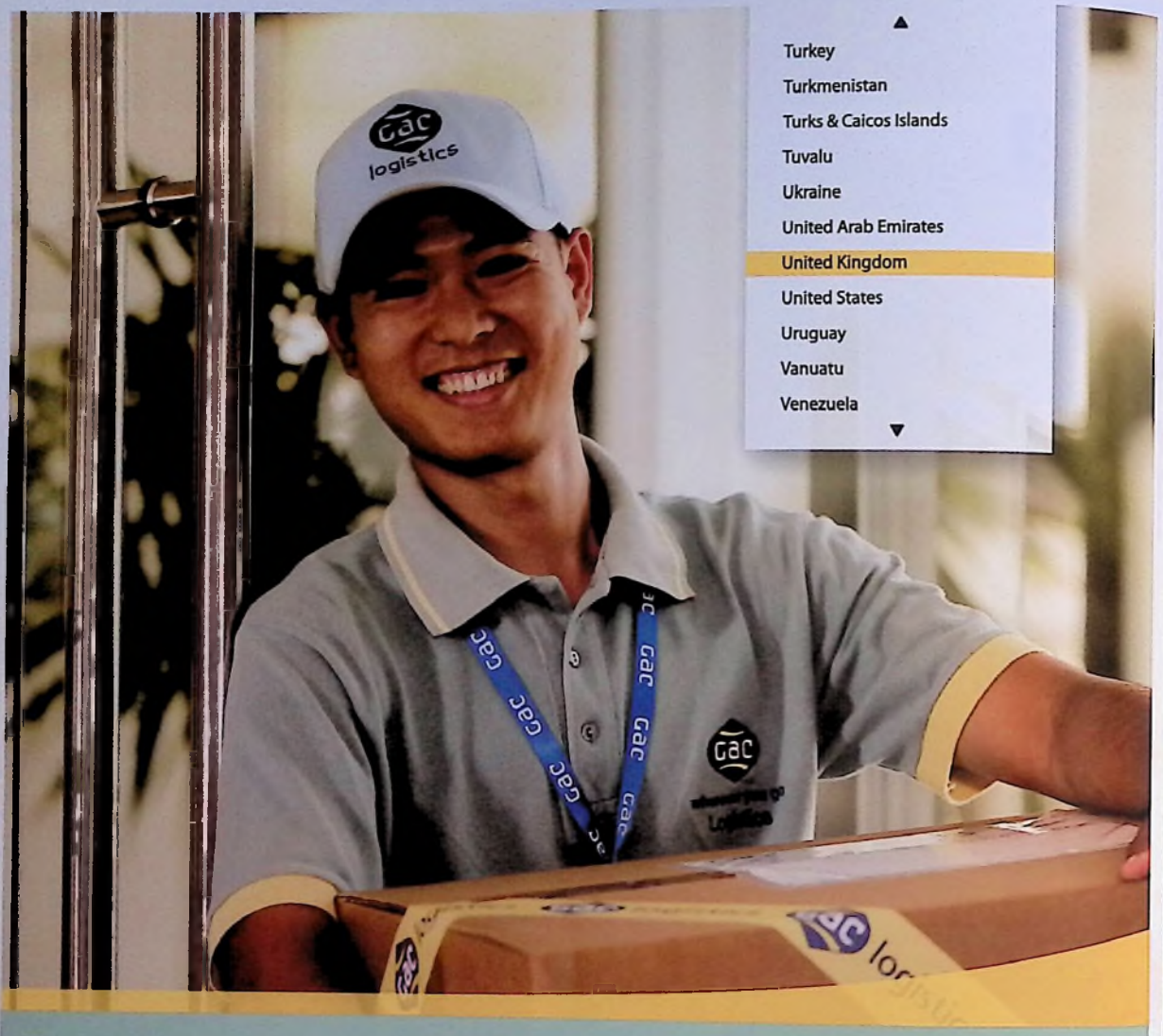

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MAN CITY

Like Oldham, City enjoy fabulous support from the fans each season so it's no surprise that they are one of just a handful of teams to have lifted the Masters Cup. 2003 was the year City went all the way, thanks in part to the likes of David White and Paul Simpson, and since these halcyon days, City have faired quite well.

The following year they made the final again, losing to Everton but in 2005 they won the North West Masters Cup for the second time. In 2006 they competed in their third final in 4 years, only to lose to Liverpool but in 2007, a blip. A poor third place finish tarnished what was shaping up to be one of the finest cup records in the tournament.

Last season however, they returned to winning ways. They topped their respective table with maximum points, beating Man Utd and Leeds but more importantly, they did so by scoring a hatful of goals. Twice they struck against their Manchester rivals; Alan Kernaghan cancelling out a Wayne Bullimore opener with Mike Sheron netting the winner.

Sheron was to prove inspirational. Against Leeds he matched Paul Simpons's brace by also bagging 2 and went on to grab the winning goal come the final, securing City's third regional title.

In ten years of Masters, Manchester City's record speaks of a team comfortable with the indoor game. A 55% win ratio can be matched with an average scoring record of 2.2 goals per game and over the course of 36 career games they've lost just 11 times.

For a team with a great Masters pedigree, anything less than a final appearance this season will be disappointing.

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

CUP RECORD | 2000 2ND | 2001 4TH | 2002 3RD | 2003 1ST | 2004 2ND | 2005 1ST | 2006 2ND | 2007 3RD | 2008 1ST

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

MAN UTD

It's always easy to talk about how a "big" club, who can draw upon the services of some truly great players, should have won a Masters Cup by now. With Liverpool, there was little surprise they won back-to-back titles in the early years of Masters, due in part because 5-a-side football was such an integral part of everyday training for those players at Anfield during their professional careers.

Of course small sided football is played at each and every club, but the transition to indoor football, on carpet under the lights affects players in different ways and to some extent Man Utd have been a victim of this.

Brian McClair, Paul Parker, Viv Anderson and Neil Webb were all mainstays of the Man Utd squad back when Masters began but even these names found it hard to make an impression on the indoor circuit. Such is the rivalry in the North West event that games tend to be decided by the odd goal and Man Utd have been on the wrong end of a string of unfortunate results.

In 2001, 2003 and 2005, they made the regional finals only to be beaten by Liverpool, Sheffield Utd (when they competed in Sheffield) and Manchester City. Had these games gone the other way, Man Utd would be a 5 time regional winner and a probable Masters Cup victor.

Last season, a dearth of players meant Utd fielded an inexperienced side who fell foul of the Masters heat but in truth, their record over the years has been poor.

They've lost 14 in 32, one game more than they've won and they've conceded 65 goals and scored just 63.

Unsurprisingly then, a renaissance is needed in the Utd camp.

TEAM SPONSOR

CHRIS O'CONNOR PROMOTIONS

CUP RECORD | 2000 3RD | 2001 2ND | 2002 1ST | 2003 2ND | 2004 3RD | 2005 2ND | 2006 4TH | 2007 1ST | 2008 4TH

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

OLDHAM

Mike Sheron. Any self respecting Oldham fan should know about this chap for it was his strike sometime during the second half of last year's North West Final that saw off the Latics' inaugural challenge.

For a team to make the final at their first attempt is a tremendous achievement. Oldham fans can take solace in the fact they lost to arguably the best team in the heat, a team incidentally that went on to be losing Grand Finalists last September and so to lose out on the cup by the odd goal, after topping the group and scoring 6 in 2 games is little short of remarkable

The fans too can take a bow. Referred to regularly as the seventh man in Masters Football, fans are integral to a team's success and the Latic's faithful showed up in numbers last summer to support their legends.

Andy Ritchie and David Eyres got them off to the perfect start against Bolton in game 1, both finding the net either side of the break to register Oldham's first goals in the competition. But a second half wobble let Bolton back in to secure the draw, so game 2 against Blackburn became a must win.

And win it they did, in style no less as Mike Milligan, Tommy Wright and Andy Ritchie pummelled Rovers into a 4-1 submission. From the start Oldham had played a solid game, making careful passes and using the channels well. Their fitness was good too and key to seeing them progress.

Disappointment in 2008 won't faze this season's Oldham team. Refreshed and rejuvenated, they return with a greater understanding of the indoor game and a real chance of making the finals in Liverpool.

TEAM SPONSOR

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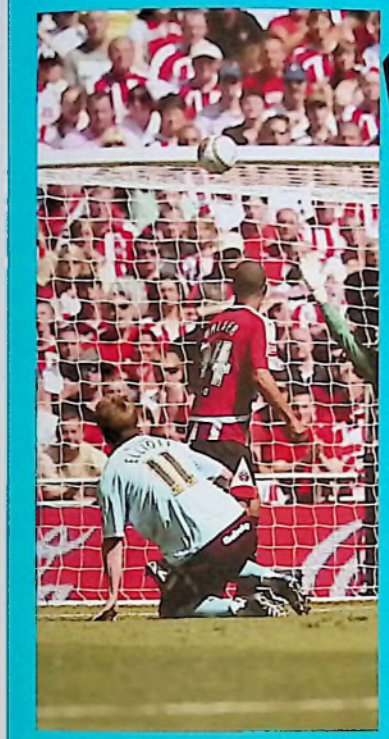
CUP RECORD | 2008 2ND

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

BURNLEY



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CUP RECORD | 2009 FIRST YEAR OF MASTERS COMPETITION

TEAM STRIP

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BLACKBURN

If you placed North West group places on the wall – spanning first to sixth – and then blindfolded yourself and (using a Blackburn Rovers logo) chose where Blackburn would finish, you would choose third or fourth every time. If you placed group places on the wall spanning first to fourth, you would choose third or fourth. In fact, if you removed third and fourth places from the wall entirely and placed them on the floor, the Blackburn Rovers logo you're using wouldn't stick to the wall anymore. It would fall to the ground, somewhere between third and fourth place.

The above paragraph, as well as being a pretty pointless piece of text, does however tell you all you need to know about Blackburn's Masters record. They come, they battle hard, they get unlucky and they finish...well, you've got that bit already.

Having contested just 4 events since 2000, the Blackburn Rovers squad simply hasn't had the requisite time to take stock and learn the ropes sufficiently to mount a serious challenge. The North West heat is one of the toughest in the calendar and teams that show just a hit of inconsistency are brutally dispatched as their rivals go in search for silverware.

Blackburn have played 11, won 3, lost 6 and drawn 2. Not great. More worryingly, they conceded 8 goals last season in 2 games, managing to score just half that in return. In 2008 they lost to Oldham and Bolton, the latter in a pulsating tie that finished 4-3, with Simon Grayson scoring 2 of the 3 Rovers' goals.

Back for their fifth Masters instalment, the 6 team format means Blackburn crucially need a good start to this year's campaign to stand any chance of progressing.

CUP RECORD | 2002 4TH | 2003 4TH | 2005 3RD | 2008 6TH

TEAM SPONSOR

MASTERS FOOTBALL

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

BOLTON

Sam Allardyce made his managerial name at Bolton throughout the naughties with a strong-arm tactic that involved suffocating the opposition's attacking threat by packing the midfield with mercenary players with high pain thresholds and getting the full backs to launch balls into the box from their own areas.

He also used the set piece to great effect, employing the services of a flair player on the fringes of greatness to score wonder goals and ensure Bolton remained in the top flight.

Admittedly, the above synopsis is terribly basic and in most part probably untrue, but interestingly, there is little doubt that an Allardyce in the Bolton Masters dressing room barking orders whilst masticating furiously (that means chewing by the way folks before you get concerned, in Big Sam's case, chewing gum) would have revolutionised their record.

Bolton have only contested 7 of the previous 9 tournaments, missing the first two years because of fixture congestion but since that time they've struggled to draw breath.

5 wins in 19 games equates to a 26% win record, which is poor whichever way you look at it. They also ship goals with frightening regularity, having conceded 53 in total. That's nearly 3 a game. Ouch.

However, the great thing about statistics is you can read them in different ways. Bolton draw very few matches, just 3 in 7 seasons which shows they play to win, irrespective of the stakes. They also score 2 a game – on a good day enough to secure a win in Masters.

In turn, the arrival of Alan Thompson signals the re-birth of the Bolton team as we near the second decade of Masters. They can improve... the question is...will they?

CUP RECORD | 2002 2ND | 2003 2ND | 2004 4TH | 2005 4TH | 2007 4TH | 2008 3RD

TEAM SPONSOR

IAVISION broadcast media

TEAM STRIP

carbrini

1. LUIS FIGO
FC Barcelona to Real Madrid

"If you elect me president, I promise Luis Figo will be Real's". So said Florentio Perez, just weeks before he lined up against Lorenzo Sanz to decide the next Real Madrid supremo. Sanz had taken Real to the top of Europe, winning their 2nd Champions League title just 2 months before, but the chance to lure Barcelona's best player away was too much.

Perez was voted in and on July 24th, 2000 Luis Figo signed for Real Madrid for US $56 million. It turned out that Perez had in fact a pre-contract with Figo, that would become valid should he win the elections.

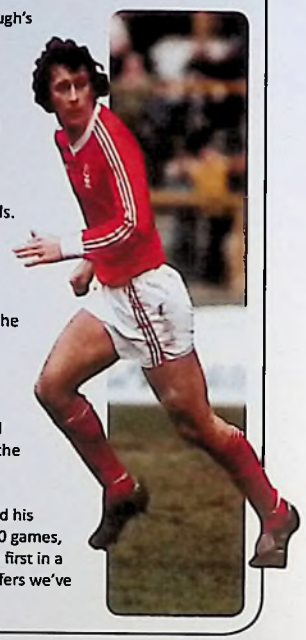
The transfer was one of the most controversial in history. Barcelona fans, so incensed by the move, instantly branded Figo a traitor, showering him with missiles when he returned with Real, including the now legendary pigs head. Figo's signing signalled the start of the Galatico era at Madrid, that saw Zidane, Ronaldo, Beckham, Owen and Robinho follow him to the Bernabeu.

2. TREVOR FRANCIS
Birmingham City to Nottingham Forest

Duncan Hamilton, Brian Clough's biographer, described this transfer as "football's equivalent of breaking the sound barrier". Just 4 short weeks after West Brom's Ron Atkinson had made Middlesbrough's David Miller Britain's first £500,000 man, Trevor Francis was lured away from Birmingham for a cool million pounds.

The transfer was sealed and introduced to the media by Brian Clough in typical fashion. Clough, impatient to play squash, attended the press conference in white gym kit, holding a racquet. Forever to be known henceforth as "the million pound man", Francis's impact for Forest was immediate, as he headed home the winner against Malmo in the 1979 European Cup Final.

Although Francis never really realised his potential at Forest - he played just 70 games, scoring 28 times - this move was the first in a long line of big money football transfers we've all now become so accustomed to.

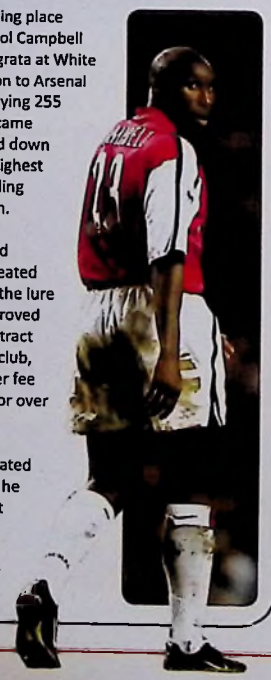


3. SOL CAMPBELL
Spurs to Arsenal

Despite this transfer taking place nearly a decade ago, Sol Campbell remains persona non grata at White Hart Lane. His defection to Arsenal in the summer of 2001 after playing 255 times over 9 years for Spurs became notorious after Campbell turned down the chance to become Spurs's highest paid footballer of all time, deciding instead to run his contract down.

Mindful of the newly established Bosman ruling, Spurs made repeated attempts to keep Campbell but the lure of Champions League football proved too much. By seeing out his contract yet refusing to sign for another club, Campbell denied Spurs a transfer fee for a player they had nurtured for over 10 years.

That Campbell had previously stated in *Spurs Monthly* magazine that he would never play for Arsenal not only made his decision to move harder to stomach, but also reinforced his image as a money grabbing mercenary for life.

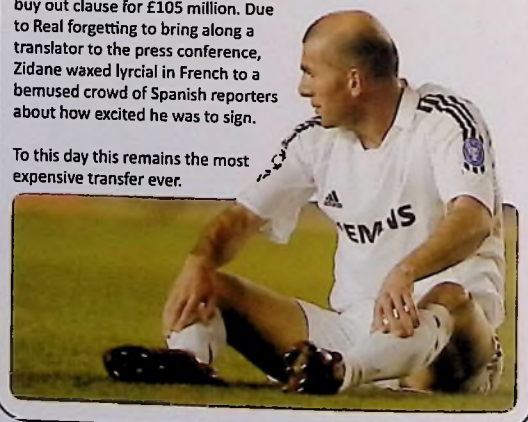


4. ZINEDINE ZIDANE
Juventus to Real Madrid

"I can officially confirm that I have signed a four-year contract with Real Madrid which includes an option for an additional year for between 480 and 500 million francs". After making Real boss Florentino Perez wait until he and his family returned from a family holiday, the world's most expensive football transfer was completed.

In the summer of 2001, Zinedine Yazid Zidane signed for Real from Italian side Juventus for a staggering £44 million, which included a buy out clause for £105 million. Due to Real forgetting to bring along a translator to the press conference, Zidane waxed lyrcial in French to a bemused crowd of Spanish reporters about how excited he was to sign.

To this day this remains the most expensive transfer ever.



5. CARLOS TEVEZ
Corinthians to West Ham

A transfer that continues to throw up problems nearly three years on, Argentinean international Carlos Tevez, along with Corinthians team-mate Javier Mascherano, joined the Hammers on 31st August 2006 in a blaze of publicity.

Questions arose over the validity of the players' contracts, since Corinthians is owned by Media Sports Investors, an international fund of investors. Premier League rules ban the ownership of players by third parties to ensure the integrity of matches and so Tevez became the unwilling figurehead of a dispute that rages to this day.

West Ham were fined a record £5.5m for withholding vital documentation over the duo's ownership and Paul Aldridge, West Ham's former Managing Director was exposed as lying to the Premier League over the existence of documents that should have been submitted.

This saga rumbles on today, amidst claims for further compensation.

6. JEAN-MARC BOSMAN
RFC Leige to Dunkirk

The transfer that changed the world of football forever. In 1990, after his 4 year contract had expired, Belgian striker Jean-Marc Bosman turned down a new deal with his club RFC Leige for a reduced wage and after agreeing terms, joined Dunkirk instead.

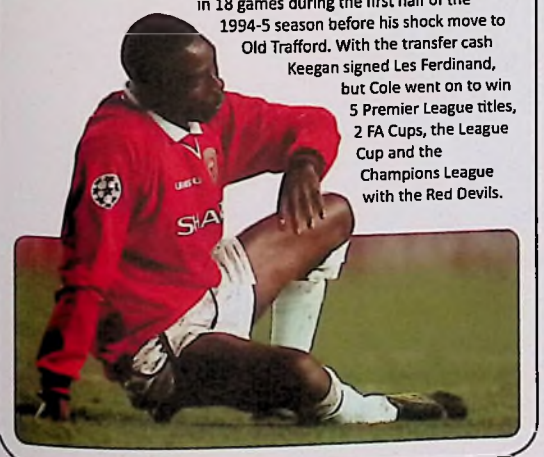
But Leige changed Bosman's valuation, making him four times more expensive so Dunkirk dropped out and the player was left without a club. Bosman sued Leige and the Belgian FC, taking his case to the European Court of Justice. The court ruled in the striker's favour, handing players the power to run down their contracts, change clubs and benefit from big signing on fees.

Bosman himself largely missed out on the wage inflation that followed, but this particular transfer left an indelible mark over the football transfer landscape.

7. ANDY COLE
Newcastle to Man Utd

Those of us of a particular age will remember the scenes vividly. Kevin Keegan, standing on the steps outside St James Park, explaining his decision to accept a then record fee of £7m - £6m cash plus £1m rated Keith Gillespie - for star striker Andy Cole to go to league rivals Manchester United.

Voted PFA Young Player of the Year in 1994, Cole had scored 9 goals in 18 games during the first half of the 1994-5 season before his shock move to Old Trafford. With the transfer cash Keegan signed Les Ferdinand, but Cole went on to win 5 Premier League titles, 2 FA Cups, the League Cup and the Champions League with the Red Devils.



8. DIEGO MARADONA
FC Barcelona to Napoli

Maradona's transfer to Napoli kick started the Italian side's fortunes where in 7 seasons, he almost single-handedly won for them 6 trophies, including their first 2 scudettos.

In 1982, his move from Boca Juniors to Barcelona looked set to be a marriage made in heaven. At 23, Maradona was reaching his peak and the lure of the Catalans paved the way for a move that would cost a world-record £4.5m. But a cultural and personal clash occurred, leaving the diminutive Argentinean hurt, un-loved and looking for a way out.

Maradona cited the breakdown of his relationship with Barcelona President Nunez, hepatitis, injury, even recreational drug use as reasons why his time in Catalonia failed so dramatically, but his transfer to Napoli for £6.9m proved to be the move that made his career.

THINK YOU KNOW YOUR STUFF?

Can you...

- NAME the player
- NAME the team
- NAME the sponsor

Answers below

Answers: 1. Bryan Roy, Nottingham Forest, Umbro - 2. Graeme Sharp, Everton, NEC - 3. Tony Cottee, West Ham Utd, JVCD - 4. Steve Bull, Wolves, Manchester United - 5. Kenny Black, Hearts, Masterlease - 6. David White, Man City, Philips, Gazette 1990, Man Utd, Sharp - 7. Brian Kilcline, Newcastle Utd, McKenzie Leger - 8. Vinny Jones, Leeds Utd, Wigfalls

CAN YOU NAME THESE SPORTS?

TEST YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Q1: Who scored Germany's "Golden Goal" in the Euro '96 Final?

Q2: Alex Ferguson appeared in a Scottish Cup Final for which team?

Q3: Who is the only player to win the European Player of the Year three times in a row?

Q4: River Plate play in which country?

Q5: Which club did Eric Cantona play for before signing for Manchester United?

Q6: Which country first beat England at Wembley in a World Cup game?

Q7: Name four players you would find in a greenhouse?

Q8: Name the team with the shortest and the longest one word team name out of all the 92 league sides.

Q9: Who was Britain's first £2m player?

Q10: Name three players who have been relegated with four different teams.

Answers: (Name the Sport) - 1. Ham vs Horse Marathon - 2. Cheese Rolling - 3. World Pea Shooting Championships - 4. World Barge Championships - 5. Fire FOOTS. (General Knowledge) - Q1. Oliver Bierhoff - Q2. Glasgow Rangers - Q3. Ruud Gullit (Kenwyn City 1995, Barnsley 1999, Maidenhead 2005, WBA 2006) Anthony GARDENER - Q4. Burn (4 letters) Peterborough (13 letters) - Q5. Leeds United - Q6. Italy - Q7. Tim FLOWERS, Jimmy GLASS, Steve FOTTS, Norman BLADE (Shrubs) Jurgen 1994, Bolton 1995/1998, Blackburn 1999, Nobody 2004) - Q8. Aldershot Town 1992, Wrexham 2000, Ilkeston Town 2002, Dagenham & Redbridge 2007)

"When the seagulls follow the trawler, it is because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea"
Eric Cantona, 1995

Crystal Palace vs Manchester United, January 25th 1995. After kicking out at Palace defender Richard Shaw, Eric Cantona is shown the red card. On his way back to the showers, he kung-fu kicks Palace fan Michael Simmons for making racial comments.

Cantona was fined £20,000 for the incident and banned from playing football for 9 months, prompting him to make this bizarre quote to the press on learning his fate. The Frenchman had previous form for aggravated violence. In 1987, he punched his own team's goalkeeper whilst playing for Auxerre.

At the time Simmons claimed his comments were just idle banter but it transpired soon after that this was unlikely. Allegedly Simmons had previous convictions for violent robbery and had attended a National Front rally prior to this incident. How lovely.

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